

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 02042 191014Z

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ACTION SS-25

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R 190933Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8210

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T ADDIS ABABA 2042

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR IS ET EG

SUBJECT: ISRAELI MILITARY ADVISERS IN ETHIOPIA

REF: STATE 24289 (NOTAL)

1. EGYPTIAN AMB BASSIOUNY RETURNED LAST WEEK AFTER TWO WEEKS IN CAIRO. HE HAS TOLD AMB THAT IF EGYPT DOES NOT GET SATISFACTORY EXPLANATION FROM EPMG CONCERNING ISRAELI MILITARY ADVISERS KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN RE-INTRODUCED INTO ETHIOPIA, AND IF THE ADVISERS CONTINUE TO BE PRESENT, EGYPT WILL "PULL OUT" OF ITS PREVIOUS EFFORTS TO ASSIST EPMG. BASSIOUNY SAYS THIS WOULD MEAN THE END OF EGYPTIAN EFFORTS AT MEDIATION ON TFAI, AND THE END OF EGYPTIAN URGING OF RESTRAINT ON OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY ON ARAB SUPPORT FOR ERITREAN REBELS.

2. EPMG FONMIN KIFLE IS SCHEDULED TO GO TO CAIRO ABOUT MARCH 5 FOR DISCUSSIONS OF EPMG PROBLEMS, AND KIFLE IS EXPECTED TO ASK FOR CONTINUED EGYPTIAN HELP IN RESTRAINING ARAB SUPPORT FOR ELF/PLF; MEDIATION ON TFAI; RESTRAINING SOMALIA; AND URGING SUDAN TO PLAY MORE ACTIVE NEUTRAL ROLE IN HELPING BRING ELF/PLF TO CONFERENCE TABLE WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS. KIFLE ALSO SCHEDULED TO ATTEND

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PAGE 02 ADDIS 02042 191014Z

AFRO-ARAB CONFERENCE IN CAIRO AROUND MARCH 20. BASSIOUNY

INDICATED THAT KIFLE'S MARCH 5 TRIP MIGHT BE CALLED OFF BY EGYPTIANS BECAUSE OF ISRAELI ADVISERS.

3. BASSIOUNY HAS BUILT UP HIGH DEGREE OF INDIGNATION, WHICH MAY NOT BE ACCURATE REFLECTION OF VIEWS HIS GOVT. BASSIOUNY KEEPS PRESSING AMB FOR "CONFIRMATION" THAT ISRAELIS ARE IN ETHIOPIA. AMB HAS REPLIED THAT IT IS NOT UP TO USG TO "CONFIRM" OR DENY SUCH INFORMATION, AND AMB HAS ADDED THAT EMBASSY INQUIRES TO WASHINGTON HAVE PRODUCED FLAT AND UNEQUIVOCAL USG STATEMENT THAT USG HAS NOT BEEN CONSULTED, NOTIFIED, OR IN ANY WAY INVOLVED WITH EITHER ISRAELIS OR ETHIOPIANS IN ANY SUCH FURNISHING OF ADVISERS.

4. BASSIOUNY'S IRRITATION IS EXACERBATED BY FACT THAT TWO WEEKS AGO DIRG CHAIRMAN TEFERI BANTE WHEN QUERIED SHARPLY AND DIRECTLY BY BASSIOUNY DENIED THAT ANY ISRAELI MILITARY ARE IN ETHIOPIA. BASSIOUNY TOOK THIS TO MEAN THAT EPMG WOULD SEND ADVISERS AWAY BECAUSE OF EGYPTIAN PRESSURES, BUT NOW BELIEVES ISRAELIS ARE STILL IN COUNTRY.
(NOTE: WE ALSO BELIEVE THEY ARE STILL HERE.)

5. BASSIOUNY TOLD AMB STORY IS CIRCULATING IN ADDIS THAT ISRAELIS WERE BROUGHT IN AS RESULT OF CIA PRESSURES ON EPMG TO DO SO. AMB DENIED ANY SUCH INVOLVEMENT, SAID HE WOULD REPORT WHAT BASSIOUNY HAD SAID, AND IF THERE WAS FURTHER USG REACTION THAT COULD BE PASSED TO BASSIOUNY HE WOULD DO SO. AMB FURTHER OBSERVED THAT RUMOR OF CIA INVOLVEMENT SOUNDED LIKE TYPICAL SOVIET DISINFORMATION PLOY OF SORT THAT EGYPTIANS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DIAGNOSE AS WELL AS ANYONE.

6. COMMENT: AGREE THERE IS LITTLE OR NOTHING USG CAN DO TO MITIGATE ARAB IRRITATION. IF EGYPT, WHICH HAS PLAYED REASONABLY EFFECTIVE MODERATING ROLE, DOES CHANGE ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD ETHIOPIA CONSEQUENCES FOR EPMG OVER LONG RUN COULD BE SERIOUS. EMBASSY DOES NOT SEE THAT FORESEEABLE BENEFITS TO EPMG FROM AN ISRAELI CONNECTION OUTWEIGH VERY CONSIDERABLE RISKS. EMBASSY HAS CONSIDERED THAT IF EPMG THINKS IT IS PLEASING USG BY
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PAGE 03 ADDIS 02042 191014Z

RE-INTRODUCING ISRAELI ADVISERS (PERHAPS HAVING BEEN TOLD SO BY ISRAELIS), IT MIGHT PROVE USEFUL FOR AMB TO TELL FONMIN KIFLE THAT SUCH IS NOT THE CASE. PRINCIPAL RISK IN DOING SO, WHICH PROBABLY OUTWEIGHS BENEFITS, WOULD BE THAT IF THERE IS SHARP ARAB BACKLASH LATER ON, EPMG WOULD SUSPECT THAT USG IS INVOLVED IN OR RESPONSIBLE FOR ARAB REACTION. WOULD WELCOME GUIDANCE.
HUMMEL

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